

108

27 July 1983

Poland: Estimating the number of Political Prisoners

Estimating the number of political prisoners in Poland is largely guess work. The regime claims that there are less than 1,000; the Catholic Church places it closer to 2,500. We are inclined to place the number at about 2,000, but caution that this is a very ~~soft~~ estimate.

Estimates of the number of political prisoners in Poland have varied widely, because of differing definitions of a "political" prisoner and varying assessments of how badly the government is under-counting. Polish government claims have generally been based on a narrow definition of what comprises a politically motivated offense. The latest figures offered by official and other sources illustrate the discrepancies.

On 21 July, the regime said about 800 people qualified for immediate release under the new partial amnesty. It placed these prisoners in three categories:

- 190 serving prison terms;
- 460 in pre-trial detention;
- 150 on furlough from jail.

The government gave no information on how many prisoners would be left in prison after this release.

A recent Polish Church report estimates that before the amnesty there were 2,400 people in jail.

- 300 imprisoned for martial law violations;
- 600 imprisoned for criminal code violations, which the Church categorizes as political offenses (a Church official admitted that this is a "soft" number);

This paper was prepared by [redacted] East European Division, Office of European Analysis. It was requested by Assistant Secretary Richard McCormack, Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, Department of State. Comments and questions are welcome and should be addressed to [redacted] Jr., Chief, East European Division, Office of European Analysis, [redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

CONFIDENTIAL

-- 1,500 awaiting trial (presumably for martial law violations).

In May a Solidarity underground activist told Western reporters that about 1,500 people were serving sentences or awaiting trial for violating martial law regulations.

We had previously estimated that as of 21 July between 700 and 1,200 had been convicted of martial law or associated offenses, or were in jail awaiting trial on such charges. We are now inclined to move closer to the Church estimates. The Church seems to have made a special effort since mid-June to estimate the number of political prisoners. It has been involved in extending aid to the families of many prisoners and probably arrived at its figure by polling local parish priests nationwide.